2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

basis, for instance, of their technique of divination, which depends on rapid and spontaneous inference from stereotyped signs and symbols.

These myths provide yet another illustration of the indifference of the Tallensi to the origins of their customs. The emphasis in their culture is on conduct, not on creed; on performance rather than on doctrine. At the same time, these myths express, as we have previously noted, the basic postulate of Tale philosophy—that the ancestors are the *fons et origo* of their whole social order—and they show also how the natives visualize their totemic taboos as symbols of the moral and ritual bonds imposed by agnatic descent.

The Totemic Avoidances of the Talis as a Reflex of the Social Structure

We can now resume our analysis of the relationship of Talis ritual observances to the social structure. We have considered certain funeral rites and totemic avoidances as the chief indices of structural differentiation. We have seen that they are not, as the natives sometimes imply, hard-and-fast criteria. They mark off the Talis cluster from the Namoos in a broad way, but reflect the overlapping between them which our study of the clanship system has brought out. And among the Talis themselves, though there is a considerable congruence between genealogical grouping as determined by the canon of agnatic descent and distinctive ritual observances, it is not a one-to-one relationship.

The funeral customs and totemic taboos we have reviewed have one feature in common which helps to explain why the natives think of them as indices of social differentiation. They are tied to the agnatic line, passed on from father to child just like membership of the lineage. They owe their binding force to the fact that they were, according to native belief, instituted by the ancestors of the lineage or clan. Hence arises a significant common element, the oath associated with the observance. Breach of the ritual observance or using the oath falsely is blasphemy against the ancestors.

We pick up this thread again in another sphere of the ritual system of the Talis. It is a common opinion in Taleland that the taboos against eating the tortoise and water-tortoise are specially characteristic of the Hill Talis. And the reason always given for this is that these taboos are connected with the Talis cult of the External *Bɔyar*. Among the Hill Talis, if a child transgresses the taboo (*galəm kihər*) by eating of the forbidden animal, its father 'pays' (*yɔ*) a fowl to the External *Bɔyar* of which his clan is an adherent. The fowl is sacrificed at the *Bɔyar*, with apologies for the transgression and pleas for the child's future well-being. A fine is thus paid to annul the trespass, and the smallness of the fine is evidence that the trespass is not considered serious.

As a rule, the group of clans and maximal lineages forming the congregation of a particular External *Bɔyar* all have the same avoidances. Thus, all the units that owe ritual allegiance to Bona'ab, the External *Bɔyar* of Kpata'ar and its associated lineages, taboo the tortoise and the water-tortoise. Hence, individuals who are the spiritual wards of Bona'ab may not eat these animals, and, if they belong to other clans or other

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

CHAPTER IV

HUSBAND AND WIFE IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE FAMILY

The General and the Particular in the Pattern of Domestic Relations

611 IT is clear from Chapter II that *dɔŋam*, the fact of birth, the event that fixes one's descent immutably, takes precedence over all other conditions governing the social relations and the social roles of a Talɔŋ. This principle comes out in all departments of Tale social life, and nowhere so plainly as in the organization of domestic life. We turn, therefore, to examine the working of kinship in the domestic family, which we have called the focal field of kinship.

593 It is important to bear in mind that kinship relations in the family group are inter-articulated in a single configuration, dominated by the *patria potestas* of the male head of the family. The relations of father and child are coloured by the relations of mother and child that coexist with them, and the relations of mother and child acquire a special accent in the context of the relations between co-wives. Particular domestic relationships appear in their true light only when they are considered as part of the total pattern. The polarity of *dug* and *yir* moulds them all; all play a part in the balance of centripetal and centrifugal forces in the structure of the family. All, moreover, are subject to the pull and pressure of genealogical connexions and groupings outside the family circle.

593 606 The natives are very conscious of this, and take it into account in the management of their lives. They say, for instance, that a woman's parents continue to have great influence over her for some years after her marriage and that is why her husband must keep on the good side of his parents-in-law. 'Don't you know what in-lawship means?' said Bayankura, somewhat lugubriously, when I found him hard at work helping to rebuild his father-in-law's homestead. Again, Tiezien's family believed that he was much under the influence of his senior wife, Tanzoo. So when by various pretexts he caused both of his late brother's sons to lose the young wives they had recently taken, they ascribed it morosely to Tanzoo's jealousy of their mother, Tiezien's second wife.

181 We shall not attempt a full-dress study of Tale family life; here we are concerned only with the structurally significant norms. In a society as homogeneous and economically undifferentiated as that of the Tallensi, people of the same sex, age, and social standing tend to have the same life history; and organized units such as the lineage and the family tend to have a stereotyped structure and development. The common denominators of action stand out.

828 156 Yet it is a constantly reiterated assumption of the natives that no two

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

people are absolutely alike. Peculiarities of personality and character, they say (and observation bears them out), qualify all social relationships. People conform to the norms but each in the light of his own experiences, his special circumstances, his personal idiosyncrasies. The same sort of events, the same kind of person-to-person relations, make up the life of every family; but they are combined in a unique way in the history of a particular family. They give a distinctive tone or atmosphere to the life of that family that can be more easily felt than described. I knew intimately six domestic families which I kept under observation for many months; I knew another dozen or so families fairly well, and spent many hours in yet other homes all over Taleland. I learnt to perceive, but I could never get below the surface of this affective ambient of family life. It is, indeed, difficult to find terms with which to convey the impression of smooth, equable, well-balanced running which a family like that of Ɔmara's makes on an observer, or the contrary impression of strain, or of inadequate co-ordination, which one sees in families like those of Kutɔbis of Tɔŋ-Dekpieng, or of Pumaan of Tɔŋ-Puhug.

Most Tale families seem to go on in a stable and harmonious way; but there are, as we shall see, very many possibilities of friction, some inevitable, some avoidable, which arise out of the cleavages inherent in the structure of the family. How long these forces of dissension remain dormant, or how they are handled when they thrust forward, depends very much on the character of the family head. A tactful and considerate family head like Ɔmara manages to keep a smooth discipline in his family and to maintain amicable relations with his neighbours, whereas an erratic man like Kutɔbis cannot keep his sons in check and is for ever at loggerheads with his nearest agnates. From the point of view of the structurally significant norms, this feature of Tale family life and of Tale kinship in general is important as underlying the elasticity of actual social behaviour within the limits of the norms, and as a dynamic factor in the cycle of changes that a family passes through.

One thing which puts a screen between an inquirer and the inner life of a family is the surprising degree of privacy a family can preserve. It is surprising in the circumstances of Tale social life. One's neighbours are one's nearest lineage kin. The lineage principle compels a man to consult and gain the support of these kin in any matter of importance, and he generally does so in trivial matters too. Men of the same lineage grow up together, play together in childhood, often work together as youths or men, constantly visit one another's homes, identify themselves with one another and act together in corporate affairs. Inevitably they know one another's personal history in detail. And this knowledge is not the mere stuff of gossip, but a real force in the corporate life of the lineage and the community, since the biography of the individual is a thread in the current history of the lineage, tying up with its common

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

or six abortive—or rather, to translate the native attitude into our own terms, experimental—marriages. Men of over 50 say, with a laugh, that they cannot remember all the women they have married who left them after a short time. Women are more discreet about their marital history; but observation leads to the conclusion that between 50 and 60 per cent. of all married women have had more than one husband.[1]

A marriage breaks up either through the action of one of the spouses, generally the woman, or through that of the wife's guardian. The Tallensi have no formal procedure for divorce. If a man wishes to get rid of a wife (which happens very seldom) he generally does so by withholding the bride-price, so that her guardian eventually recalls her, or he makes her life so uncomfortable that she deserts him. If a woman decides to leave a husband, she simply absconds. She may do so because she dislikes him, or because he does not feed her well enough, or neglects her sexually or otherwise, or, natives say, out of mere caprice. All women, according to the men, are fickle and gullible; a plausible suitor can seduce any woman. So if a young wife goes to visit her parents and stays longer than two or three days, her husband, be he an ardent young man or a sober greybeard, hurries off to fetch her, usually in considerable dudgeon, for fear that she may be abducted by another man.

Despite these initial pitfalls of marriage, families do get established and remain stable. Though the idea of marriage as a lifelong and irrevocable bond does not exist among the Tallensi, many couples do settle down for life, and many other couples remain united for a long enough stretch of years to produce one or more children.

Many complicated circumstances have an influence on this. Naturally, the jural formalities must be properly complied with. That is to say,

[1] Many of these experimental marriages are not marriages at all, according to the strict letter of custom, since they are sometimes dissolved before placation gifts have been made and often before any instalment of the bride-price has been paid. Some last only a few weeks. But they are always called marriages; for it is a fact that many marriages that begin in exactly this way do turn out to be stable in the end. Counting as 'wives' only those for whom bride-price was paid and who bore children to their husbands, I found, among a randomly chosen group of 20 men over 45, approximately, that only 2 had had 1 wife each; only 3 had had 2 wives each; the remaining 15 (= 75 per cent.) had all had more than 2 wives each. Altogether, these 20 men had had 71 wives (average 3·5 wives each); they had lost 21 (average 1 each) by death; and at the time of the census they had 45 wives (average 2·25 each). But most of them claimed to have 'married' from 10 to 20 times and were able to give a fairly complete history of these abortive 'marriages'.

Among a randomly chosen group of 20 women of child-bearing age—who were therefore not yet at the end of their matrimonial careers—6 (= 30 per cent.) had had only one husband each; 7 (= 35 per cent.) had had only 2 husbands each; the remaining 7 (= 35 per cent.) had had more than 2 husbands each, 4 of them having had more than 3 husbands each. Apart from the propensity to choose a final husband by trial and error, the custom of the levirate helps to increase the number of husbands a woman may have in her lifetime.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

593 It is useful to keep these general principles in mind in considering the details to which we must now give our attention. Putting it broadly, the relations of parents and children can be grouped in three general categories: relations of identification; of opposition or contra-identification; and of reciprocity; and the pattern in each individual case is the product of the interaction of these three categories. Our interest will lie chiefly in the structurally significant norms which give coherence and consistency to the multifarious variety of actual behaviour.

The Importance of 'Rearing'

181 We know that Tallensi regard the possession of offspring, particularly of sons, as the supreme purpose of life. To live long enough to see one's sons' children—to 'reach grandchildren (*paa yaas*)' as the natives say—is a gift surpassing all material wealth. Tallensi believe that it is better to die in poverty and leave children than to die childless but rich. We have seen, also, that they hold it to be the ideal of normal parenthood for physiological and social parenthood to coincide. This is more than a question of conferring social status by descent. From the native standpoint the important thing is that a child's natural parents are the right people to rear it, educate it, and control it.

861 [538] [431] Tallensi say that *ughug*, bringing up a child, is as vital a part of parenthood as *dɔyam*, bearing or begetting. There is a proverb, 'Rearing is more important than bearing (*Ughug n-gaat dɔyam*)', often quoted when they comment on the devotion of a person to a proxy or foster-parent. This is socially recognized in the obligation to give a 'cow of rearing (*ughug na'ah*)' to a foster-father out of the bride-price cattle received for a foster-daughter by her natural parent or guardian, and for a foster-son, when he returns to his natal home. It is, to be sure, only a moral obligation, but no self-respecting native would evade it. It is a recompense for the troubles the foster-father had to endure in bringing up the child. Tallensi feel strongly that it is not enough to bring a child into the world; one must also bring it up successfully, and that is the hardest part.

593 855 In spite of reshufflings due to widows remarrying and the instability of early marriages, the majority of Tale children grow up with their natural parents. A census taken in 1934 showed that of 170 children estimated to be under 16 selected at random in one settlement, nearly 78 per cent. were living with their own parents. Approximately 20 per cent. were in the care of one natural parent and one proxy parent, and only 2 per cent. were orphans cared for by more distant kin.

593 861 828 Tallensi perceive that the social and personal relationships of a particular parent with his or her children are a result very largely of the way the children are brought up. They stress the influence of individual differences in personality in these relationships. There is always a personal bias in the way people interpret the accepted norms

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

and conform to them. Extreme cases illustrate this best. There is the harsh disciplinarian whose sons fret under his control and often take the first opportunity of running away. Saɣəbazaa was said to have been a man of this kind—puritanical, industrious, and inclined to be over-strict with his children. Four of his sons left him to seek work abroad. He made his daughters marry men he chose for them, and when one of them ran away with another man he whipped her and sent her back to her first husband. At the opposite extreme are men like Guna'ab and Yɛanbərigya. They are casual and irresponsible. Guna'ab's sons were often pointed out as an example of bad parental influence. They did not farm but tried to earn a living by trading in chickens; they were reputed to be lazy and extravagant, and showed no respect to their father or his brothers—'just like their father', people said.

Nevertheless, it is a fundamental axiom that the ties of rearing do not wipe out the absolutely binding ties of procreation (*dəɣam*). Whether a person is reared by his own parents or not, whether he is badly or well brought up, nothing can erase the binding ties between parents and children. It is desirable for children to be brought up by their natural parents because then there will be no contradiction between the ties of *dəɣam* and the adventitious ties of affection created by upbringing.

By Tale custom, if a woman leaves a husband by whom she has had a child and is properly married to another man, the child lives with her during its infancy. When it is five or six years old it can be claimed by its natural father. This is called 'separating (*pəhəg*)' it from its mother. Tallensi think it immoral to separate a child from its mother before it is well able to fend for itself. I once heard a group of elders expostulate angrily with a man for taking his two children, aged about 4 and 7, from their mother who had married another man. The elders said the children would not thrive in the care of another woman; their father was acting out of sheer malice. He would be well advised to leave them with their mother for another three or four years and then claim them. Their prophecy was right, for the children pined away and both died within a year. This is an extreme case. But it is a good illustration of a problem that often arises when men claim the custody of their children from an ex-wife. A compromise between the claims of natural parenthood and jural paternity has to be struck which will not endanger the child's life.

Rights and Duties of Parents

We shall have much to say about the rights and duties of parents and children in this book and it will be useful to list here briefly the most important of them. The central fact is the dominance of the father in all social relations; but this is balanced by the personal equality of the parents in the intimate domestic sphere.

A father's first duty to his children is to provide them with food.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

593 old, admonished sometimes by his mother, tries not to eat too greedily lest his 2-year-old brother or sister eating with him should not have his fill. The 11- or 12-year-old, copying his parents, will take a mouthful or two and then say he has had enough, leaving the dish to be finished by his younger siblings. Thus are the seeds of the concern for each other's welfare commonly found between full siblings planted through the precept and example of the mother.

593 867 As we have seen, children sleep with their mother in infancy and early childhood. The feeling of emotional security this gives to a child thus becomes associated with his maternal siblings. Tarəmba, aged about 9, was playing with his usual companions of about the same age—four other boys and a little girl. All but one of these children came from the same expanded family. I stopped to chat to them. After a while we got on to the subject of parents. Yindubil said he preferred his father to his mother. Tarəmba interrupted, exclaiming, 'Hee! he's telling fibs. It 's only because his mother has run away. My mother is dead and so I can't help it, I've got to like my father best. But if you have a mother it 's different. She is the one who gives you food and when night comes you sleep beside her, and you don't have bad dreams. If [828] you sleep alone you have bad dreams.' For a Talən sleeping badly or having bad dreams is the arch symptom of a state of anxiety. Tarəmba's wistful remarks sum up vividly what a mother means to a Talən as the focus of his sense of security, and this affect adheres to a full sibling. It forms a strong motive in the reluctance of full brothers to part and set up separate households or separate homesteads. Təbəg and Dəbil were full brothers (*saarət*), both middle-aged men with adult children. They lived together and farmed together in great amity. I knew them well and had occasion more than once to discuss with them one of my stock subjects, why *soog* brothers do not, like half-brothers, separate when their families start growing up. 'No', they said, 'thus it is pleasant (*ɣwala m-mah*). Being together thus we help each other. We two sitting here, are we not the children of one mother? He and I, we come from one vulva (*ti yi la pɛn yɛnni na*).' This is the standard explanation given for the lifelong partnership of *soog* brothers.

Soog siblings are generally devoted to each other and always, as far as my observation goes, unquestioningly loyal to each other in relation to other people. One sees this very clearly in the behaviour of young children. Babies and infants are often left by their mothers in the care of older children. A woman may ask one of her co-wives' children to keep an eye on her infant for a little while, but it is not usual for an infant to be left for hours on end, or a whole day, in the care of a half-sibling. So if one sees an infant being carried about by a young girl of 10 or 11 one can be fairly certain that they are either full siblings or that the little nursemaid is the infant's mother's classificatory 'sister' or 'child', whom she has specially brought to live with her

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

If a person is ill tempered or unnecessarily sharp with him, or appears to dislike him, a Talaŋ retorts with 'Why do you dislike me? Am I your *nyeer*, or what? (*I yaagɔm bɔ? Man a i nyeer bɛ?*)' This formula is always spoken half-mockingly; for the rivalry of successive children, though assumed to be in the very nature of their relationship, is not taken too seriously. It is not, like the underlying rivalry of father and first-born son, subject to ritual sanctions. It is simply an acute expression of the familiarity and equality of siblings and does not destroy their solidarity.[1] Tallensi themselves say that successive siblings often get on together admirably and stand together as staunchly as any other full siblings. I have never heard it said that *soog* brothers are quicker to set up separate households if they are successive siblings than if they are not.

Tale custom recognizes the rivalry of successive siblings in a number of other ways. Thus successive siblings (this applies chiefly to brothers) may not be buried in the same grave. If they are, their spirits will be continually quarrelling and persecuting their descendants until they are exhumed and separated. Again, successive sisters may not be married to the same man or even to the same clan. But this rule is, to my own knowledge, often broken. If they do happen to be married into the same clan the sisters must avoid being pregnant at the same time or, if they are, they must not see each other during their pregnancy. If they do one or both will miscarry. Here it is belief rather than practice that is a sign of the rivalry of successive siblings. Tallensi object to having two sisters married to the same man for prudential reasons. They say that it is obviously more difficult to get eight cows out of one man in payment of bride-price than it is to get four cows. Nevertheless it does sometimes occur. A well-to-do son-in-law who has his father-in-law's esteem can often persuade the old man to give him another daughter to wife. If the girls are successive siblings, a very simple magical rite involving the burying of a hoe at the entrance of the husband's homestead serves to 'cut' their *nyeer* relationship.[2]

[1] I do not know whether successive siblings quarrel more often than non-successive siblings. Tallensi say they do. Knowing the Tallensi, I have no doubt that conventional expectation itself acts as a stimulus to petty wrangling between successive siblings. Every time they have a disagreement not only onlookers but they themselves put the conventional interpretation on the situation, and this is bound to make them more touchy in relation to each other than to other siblings. In every aspect of Tale social life cultural definitions and expectations direct behaviour in this way. On the other hand, I knew several pairs of successive siblings who got on extremely well together and to all appearances never said a cross word to each other. Tallensi admit that this is quite common and explain it by the invariable stock phrase 'It 's all a matter of character'.

[2] A question that immediately suggests itself is, whence does the rivalry of successive siblings arise? I have put this question to many Tallensi. The usual answer is in terms of the cliché that 'it is in the nature of things (*de yɛl nla*)'.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

To return to our main subject, squabbles between children, whether they are successive siblings or not, are laughed away. When adult brothers and sisters quarrel it is taken more seriously. The irresponsibility—as the men view it—of women in marriage often leads to family quarrels. A woman who runs away from a husband to whom she has been given, or obstinately returns to one from whom she has been taken, arouses her father's and her brothers' anger. There may be a temporary estrangement between them. But in the end they usually become reconciled again. If she does not give in, her father or brothers do. 'They have no alternative but to give in (*ba kɔŋ ka diegɔra*)', the natives say. Before that happens, however, there may be a father's curse on the girl and hard words spoken to her and her husband by her brothers.

Adult *soog* brothers also fall out at times, but in contrast to disputes between half-brothers this seems very rarely to become either the pretext or the stimulus to their deciding to separate. Tallensi ascribe it to peculiarities of personality. The very fact that full brothers are often alike in character may be the cause of friction between them. To give one or two illustrations, there was the case of Zaŋ and his older *soog* brother Pumaan. They were both inclined to be solitary, egocentric, excessively touchy about their status, and suspicious of others. The strong competitive streak in them inevitably coloured their relations. So Zaŋ often complained that he found Pumaan's authority irksome. But there was never, as far as I could discover, an open quarrel between

But one or two more thoughtful informants appeared to have an inkling of the deeper sources of this peculiarity. They connected it with the fact that the older sibling is 'set aside' or 'left to itself (*bah*)' by the mother when she becomes pregnant with its *nyeer*. That is to say, the child's physical weaning is completed and simultaneously its affective attachment to its mother—a very possessive attachment with unweaned Tale babies—is brought to an end. A *nyeer* dispossesses its immediately preceding sibling of their mother's undivided care and devotion in both the physical and the psychological sense. This is a fact of observation and one which has a direct influence on family life. As we know, Tallensi maintain that it is very difficult for a woman to take care of two unweaned infants, hence the prohibition against a woman's becoming pregnant again before her infant is old enough to do without her undivided attention. When this custom is broken, so that a premature pregnancy follows, the parents are said to *nye* their child. As this term, cognate with *nyeer*, suggests, and conventional opinion confirms, a premature *nyeer* is believed to endanger a child's life. On the analogy of what is known to happen in our society, it can be surmised that the open acknowledgement of rivalry between successive siblings is a culturally standardized safety-valve for the jealousy and resentment the older sibling has against the younger for robbing him of their mother's attention. This explains also why successive birth order is the significant feature and not survival order. The older child's resentment will be directed only against its immediately next-born sibling, the one on whose account it was 'set aside', whether that sibling lives or not. It is possible, moreover, that open acknowledgement of the rivalry of successive siblings prevents it from turning into a disruptive element in the relations of siblings.

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

its continuity depends upon adequate transmission to their descendants. Their social structure, which is built up on the lineage system, and their economic organization put a premium on this, and a significant motive for stressing the continuity of their culture arises from their ancestor cult. Every Talaŋa desires sons so that there may be some one left to pour libations and make sacrifices to him after his death. The ancestor cult and family morality combine to imbue every man and woman with an intense sense of their continuity, both physical and psychological, with their parents on the one hand and their children on the other. A man feels a moral compulsion to pass on his private possessions, his craft, tools, and knowledge to his son, a woman to her daughter. He has the same feeling about carrying on a craft or cult which had been practised by a parent. Ironwork is not merely a profitable craft to the blacksmiths of Sakpee; it is a religious duty to their ancestors.

The most conspicuous affective moment in the religious system of the Tallensi is this sense of moral obligation to parents and children. It is the counterpart of the notion that the sins of the fathers will be visited on the offspring even unto the third and fourth generation. Last year, for instance, Kuwaas had to promise heavy sacrifices to expiate the sin of his grandfather, who was responsible, three generations ago, for the ravaging of his clan settlement by the Hill Talis.

The idea of education is, therefore, not only understood but also frequently formulated in discussions and conversations. A chief once observed to me that children learn who their fathers and ancestors (*banam ni yaanam*) were by listening at sacrifices. 'Our ancestor shrines are our books', he said. Nyaaŋzum, a man of 45–50, put these conceptions neatly and precisely one day when we were discussing some particularly secret ritual matters. His 'grandson',[1] a youth of about 25, was with us. 'Shall we send him away?' I asked. 'No,' he replied, 'if he listens it doesn't matter. He will not gossip to any one. And when some day I am no longer here, is it not he who will take it on? If he listens will he not know, will he not acquire wisdom?' When children are very small, he explained, they know nothing about religious things. 'They learn little by little. When we go to the

[1] Kinship terms placed between inverted commas are translations of native terms indicating classificatory kin.

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

shrine they accompany us and listen to what we say. Will they not 869
[thus] get to know it?' His own small son Badiwona (6–7 years) is 861
extremely devoted to him. One day, affectionately patting the child, 828
he said: 'When we come out in the morning, and if he doesn't see [593]
me, he seeks about for me. If he doesn't find me he won't rest. That is why I had him initiated last year. Whatever I do he also sits and listens. Will he not get to know it thus? And when I am gone will he not say that when he was a child he used to go about with his father and used to see how his father did this and that? This is my child and I am teaching him uprightness. If he is about to do anything that is not seemly I tell him, so that when he grows up he will know upright ways.'[1]

Education, it is clear, is regarded as a joint enterprise in which 861
parents are as eager to lead as children to follow. In consequence of 856
this attitude adults are very tolerant of children's ways and especially about their learning. A child is never forced beyond its capacity. This is seen most clearly in relation to the pivotal economic activity, agriculture. However skilful a boy may be with his hoe, he will not be forced to do as much work as an adult. Men often restrain their sons of 12–14 from joining the adults in hoeing on the grounds that over-exertion is harmful. Again, women do not take daughters of 9–10 on firewood expeditions to the bush.

That skill comes with practice is realized by all. When adults are 868
asked about children's mimetic play they reply: 'That is how they learn.' Thus when a boy is 7 or 8 his father buys him a small bow so that he can go and learn marksmanship in play with his comrades. Yet the existence of individual differences in ability, both amongst children and amongst adults, is recognized and cited with reference to the acquisition of skill. Rapid learning or the acquisition of a new skill is explained by *u mar nini pam*, 'he has eyes remarkably', that is, he is very sharp. A friend of mine who was a cap-maker told me how he had learnt his craft, as a youth, from a Dagban by carefully watching him at work. When he was young, he explained, he had 'very good eyes'. This conception of cleverness is intelligible in a society where learning by looking and copying is the commonest manner of achieving dexterity both in crafts and in the everyday manual activities.

[1] He learns—*u bamhora*, cognate with *bay*, to know; I teach him—*mpaanumi*.

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

mothers are busy with some household task. A healthy infant will remain sitting thus, almost motionless, playing with a fragment of calabash, a stick, or the sand—for the idea of giving an infant a toy or some attractive trinket to occupy it when itis left alone does not occur to the Tallensi. On the other hand, when an infant clamours for attention there is always some one of its kinsfolk near at hand to render it.

The native point of view about physical growth was well illustrated in the case of two infants belonging to a single extended family which I knew well. The younger infant was a lively, healthy, inquisitive girl of about 2¼–3 years old already toddling about and exploring the world. The other infant, a boy about 3 months older, had been puny and ailing from birth and, though obviously intelligent, was chronically fretful and dependent and had not yet begun to walk. In Taleland the number three is symbolical of maleness, four of femaleness. Hence it is said in their folk-lore that boys begin to walk and talk in their third year, girls in their fourth. Yet the glaring discrepancy in development between these two infants caused no anxiety to the parents of the boy, except about his health. They realized clearly the connexion between his retardation and his health, but were entirely complacent about the former. That he would walk and talk in due course was taken for granted.

The expectation of normal behaviour. It will be evident from these examples that in the cultural idiom of the Tallensi age is not conceived as a significant factor in psycho-physical or social development. Yet relative seniority determines status and rights even in children's groups and their notion of time is explicit and clear. They think of genetic development primarily in terms of maturity, which is a synthetic concept embracing both physiological and behavioural signs. Growing up, in other words, is the evolution of one's social personality as it approximates closer and closer to the fully grown, mature adult. Just as this point of view precludes deliberate and standardized methods of training children in the rudimentary bodily skills such as walking, talking, and eye-hand co-ordination in eating, so it would be incompatible with a didactic attitude about bowel and bladder control or about sexual habits and knowledge.

This point of view gives rise to a factor of great importance in Tale education, the *expectation of normal behaviour*. In any given social

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

828 situation everybody takes it for granted that any person participating either already knows, or wants to know, how to behave in a manner appropriate to the situation and in accordance with his level of maturity. An effort to learn is thus evoked as an adaptation to the demands of a real situation. It is not that people expect one another [183 879] to act with automatic and machine-like precision; for in point of fact Tale culture tolerates considerable elasticity in the patterns of behaviour. We have an analogy in our own culture in the expectation entertained by most adults that little girls want to play with dolls and little boys with toy engines. We act on this expectation whenever we buy presents for children. How exactly this influences the play of Western children has not been investigated, but there can be little doubt that it does. We expect children to know how to play without being taught.

863 In contrast to this, many Western mothers nowadays do not expect their children to acquire clean habits simply in the normal course of development, and therefore set out to train them deliberately from earliest infancy in these habits. Tale mothers never train their children deliberately to be clean. When they reach the stage of walking and talking easily, children are expected not to defecate indoors in the daytime but to be asked to be taken outside or to run out themselves. A lapse meets with an expression of disapproval and a reprimand: 'You are big enough already. Can't you go outside to defecate?' 868 The child learns in response to the expectation that it is capable of 198 normal behaviour in that respect.[1] Similarly, infants are expected to

[1] The example is intended to illustrate how the expectation of normal behaviour acts but, of course, other factors are also involved in the Tale child's acquisition of clean habits. These habits are learnt gradually, not all at once. Before it can walk or talk, its mother or an older child sometimes takes it outside when it shows signs of wishing to defecate. By the time it is expected to be clean it is being drawn into the play-activities of slightly older children, most of which take place out of doors. The need to adapt itself to the habits and standards of its older playmates is a strong stimulus to the child to learn not only bowel and bladder control but also the rules [576 of etiquette. As the Tallensi have no special sanitary arrangements, but excrete 519] in the open anywhere near the homestead, taking care only to keep a little way from the paths and from any people who may be about, it is easy for a child to learn the adult convention from the example of older children and adults. Clean habits, like other skills, are learnt as organic responses (see below, p. 10). I shall refer to this matter again, in another context, in a later section.

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

understand or to be eager to understand the language of adults, and no one would think of using ' baby talk ' to them.

As normal behaviour is always expected, no one hesitates to correct a child or adult who behaves inappropriately through ignorance, and the correction is generally accepted with alacrity and ease. If children are allowed to be present at the activities of adults, they are assumed to be interested in and to understand what is being said and done. No one would inhibit his conversation or actions because children are present, or withhold information upon which adequate social adjustment depends from a child because it is thought to be too young. Tallensi, therefore, are not surprised at the comprehensive and accurate sexual knowledge of a 6-year-old, though direct instruction in these matters is never given. As with the ordinary skills and interests of daily life, they expect children to want to know such things. *Naawun mpaan ba*, ' Heaven teaches them ', they say, or, as we should put it, it is perfectly natural.

It is known that some people learn more quickly and accurately than others, that variations in skill and ability exist. But the idea of precocity or retardation as a quality of a child's character has no place in Tale thought. A child may intrude on a situation where some one of his or her degree of maturity has no business to be and will be categorically dismissed then; but it would never be rated for being ' old-fashioned '. Every child is expected to be eager to know and to do as much as its social space and its stage of psycho-physical development permits. Hence, though it is clearly recognized that knowledge, skill, and capacity for social adjustment grow cumulatively, the Tallensi have no technique of isolating a skill or observance from the total reality and training a child in it according to a syllabus, as, for instance, we train children in dancing, the multiplication table, or the catechism. Tale educational method does not include drill as a fundamental technique. It works through the situation, which is a bit of the social reality shared by adult and child alike.

The conceptions and practices we have been considering constitute the significant factors in education by participation in practical tasks which is often described as the distinctive method of primitive societies and is as conspicuous in Taleland as in every other preliterate country. It may be observed that even in Western society the

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

principal method of education is by participation. A child repeating the multiplication table is participating in the practical activity appropriate to and defined by the school; but measured by the total social reality it is a factitious activity, a training situation constructed for that purpose. The Tallensi do not make systematic use of training situations. They teach through real situations which children are drawn to participate in because it is expected that they are capable and desirous of mastering the necessary skills.

Corresponding to this contrast in method we can observe a contrast in psychological emphasis. The training situation demands atomic modes of response; the real situation requires organic modes of response. In constructing a training situation we envisage a skill or observance as an end-product at the perfection of which we aim and therefore arrange it so as to evoke only motor or perceptual practice. Affective or motivational factors are eliminated or ignored. In the real situation behaviour is compounded of affect, interest and motive, as well as perceptual and motor functions. Learning becomes purposive. Every advance in knowledge or skill is pragmatic, directed to achieve a result there and then, as well as adding to a previous level of adequacy.

The expectation of normal behaviour and organic response operate also in the education of a Western child, e.g. when it is learning speech or manners. In Taleland it is the most effective factor in the inculcation of a wide range of social behaviour from bowel and bladder control to ritual notions, and from economic skills to sexual habits.

Interests, skills, and observances. We have seen, now, that a Tale child acquires the interests, skills and observances which comprise the repertoire of adult social behaviour not in discrete categories but in a synthetic combination. But it is necessary, for analytical purposes, to define such categories of behaviour. They refer to forms of overt behaviour and not to the psychological functions or mechanisms subsumed therein.

Interests. By *interest* I mean simply the observable fact that, according to their level of maturity, Tale children and adults spontaneously show preference for some activities rather than others; that they have a selective orientation in their social space, e.g. reacting to some people more readily than to others; that they obviously seek to satisfy

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FEIT Tallensi FE11

867 'father'. A child learns the fundamental kinship terms and has the
601 idea of distinguishing its relatives according to generation and
602 genealogical distance long before it can couple this knowledge accurately with differential behaviour towards kinsmen. The 6-year-old knows the correct terms and appropriate behaviour defining its relations with the members of its own paternal family and has grasped the principle of classification according to descent. But in practice he still confuses spatial proximity and relative age with kinship, beyond the limits of his own family. The 10–12 year old has mastered the schema, except for some collateral and affinal kinsmen, the terms for whom are known though he cannot describe the relationships.

183 Biological drives and cultural motives combine to produce variations
856 in the rates of evolution of different schemas. I have not the experimental data to give accurate or even sample norms, but a rough indication is possible. If the 6-year-old is compared with the 12-year-old in respect to e.g. knowledge of the kinship structure, of agricultural processes, of ritual, and of sex life, the 6-year-old is least advanced in knowledge of the kinship structure and ritual, and most advanced in his or her knowledge of sex life, while knowledge of agricultural processes could fall somewhere between these two levels.

V. Fundamental Learning Processes

153 In the course of the preceding discussion I have given several indications of how Tale children are taught and learn. But our investigation would be incomplete without a special consideration of the three fundamental processes utilized by the child in its learning —mimesis, identification, and co-operation. These are not the only learning techniques observable among the Tallensi, but they are the most important; and they usually appear not in isolation but in association with one another. They are most intimately interwoven in play, the paramount educational exercise of Tale children.

153 *Mimesis.* Writers on primitive education have often attributed an
828 almost mystical significance to 'imitation' as the principal method by which a child learns. The Tallensi themselves declare that children learn by 'looking and doing'; but neither 'imitation' nor the formula used by the Tallensi help us to understand the actually observable process. Tale children do not automatically copy the

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

actions or words of older children or adults with whom they happen to be without rhyme or reason and merely for the sake of 'imitation'. For hours at a stretch mimetic behaviour may be unnecessary, but in certain types of situation it is the child's readiest form of cognitive adaptation.

Mimesis occurs (*a*) as a response to direct stimulation; (*b*) as an adaptation to a situation the child does not know how to deal with on the basis of its attainments at the time; (*c*) in play, when it is rehearsing in fantasy its interests and the life of the world about it. The Tale boy who learns the leatherworkers' or blacksmiths' craft by closely studying his father at his work and listening to his explanations, tentatively repeating the procedure with scraps of leather or iron and gradually perfecting his skill, is no more learning by imitation than our own children do when they learn arithmetic by copying procedures demonstrated on the blackboard. If he does not understand the craftsman's procedure the lad will never learn it.

We have already had examples of mimesis in response to direct stimulation—e.g. when an infant begins to learn to dance. A child's first efforts at talking are constantly stimulated in this way. At the babbling stage its mother or grandmother, or whoever is looking after it, will frequently in playful mockery mimic its babblings, 'What are you muttering there?' says the woman, 'gba-gba-gba-ma-ma . . .', and the infant is thus stimulated to repeat these sounds again and again. I have often observed incidents such as the following: Duun was playing with his little daughter of about 2. He called her, 'Kologo-o-o ee!' and she replied 'm!'; and again he called, and she replied; and so on for about five minutes. Then he said, 'Call the dog, wo-ho, wo-ho!' The infant repeated, 'Wo-wo!' Again he called the dog and the infant repeated the call, and so on several times. Some one spoke to him, and turning his attention from the child, he answered. The infant, still influenced by the set of the game, repeated, as well as she could, a word or two, much to his amusement. As we have seen, the expectation of normal behaviour influences parents to talk to infants as if they understand everything.

When there is a pair or a group of children together, the oldest or most self-possessed generally gives the cues to behaviour which the others follow. This is logical, since collective action must be common

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

laughing and called to me: ' Don't believe her, she's much too small.' But these innocent fabrications illustrate the contents of children's identifications with adults.[1]

Co-operation. Mention has previously been made of children's co-operation in the ordinary social and particularly economic activities in a manner and to an extent commensurate with their maturity at the time. But it must be referred to again in order to emphasize why it is specially important for children's learning. The little girl who goes with her mother to the water-hole and is given a tiny pot of water to carry is making only an infinitesimal contribution to the household's water supply. Yet it is a real contribution. She learns to carry her little pot of water in relation to a real need of the household. The boy at a sacrifice called to hold the leg of a carcass while it is skinned not only receives his first lessons in anatomy thus; he is performing a task necessary for the completion of the ceremony. The children summoned to carry balls of swish for the men building a house are contributing valuable labour. The child's training in duty and skill is always socially productive and therefore psychologically worth while to him; it can never become artificial or boring.

Yet as long as the child's co-operation is limited to subsidiary assistance—that is, until he reaches adolescence—it includes an element emanating from the child's own psychology, an element of play. Upon the adult Talənsi the economic system bears down with a disciplinary and constraining effect. The house must be built, plastered, and thatched in time, before the rains come; the crops must be planted, hoed, harvested at the right moment, and the penalty for negligence is severe. The child cannot yet experience this. Its co-operation is still partly wish-fulfilment and has for it the attractions of an imaginative experiment. Thus, whenever there is building in progress, they play at building as well as help carrying swish; and the play part is for the child of equal importance with the work.

Play in relation to social development. The concept of play (*ba deemrəmɛ*, ' they are playing ') is well defined and clearly recognized by the

[1] This exposition of identification is over-simplified in order not to burden the general argument. In Taleland, as elsewhere, it is not the sole determinant of character formation. It has been stressed here in order to underline its educational importance.

[A Kind of mud mortar -- Analyst]

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

[828] Tallensi. The play of Tale children, it has been pointed out, emerges partly as a side-issue of their practical activities. It is also an end in itself, and has a noteworthy role in their social development. In his play the child rehearses his interests, skills, and obligations, and makes experiments in social living without having to pay the penalty for mistakes. Hence there is always a phase of play in the evolution of any schema preceding its full emergence into practical life. Play, therefore, is often mimetic in content, and expresses the child's identifications. But the Tale child's play mimesis is never simple and mechanical reproduction; it is always imaginative construction based on the themes of adult life and of the life of slightly older children. He or she adapts natural objects and other materials, often with great ingenuity, which never occur in the adult activities copied, and rearranges adult functions to fit the specific logical and affective configuration of play.[1]

A typical play situation. How vividly these motifs appear in the play of Tale children will be evident to the reader if I describe shortly an actual play situation as I observed and recorded it. I shall describe a typical play episode among children at the transition from infantile egocentricity and dependence to social play and participation in peripheral economic activities. It will be noted how recreational and imaginative play are interwoven with practical activities and how infantile habits still persist. The children's interests fluctuate from moment to moment, egocentric attitudes alternate with co-operative play, and the economic task receives only sporadic attention. Later on we shall consider these factors in relation to the phases of development of children's play.

On a morning in June I found Gɔmna, aged about 7, his half-sister Zɔŋ, aged about 6, and his friend Zoo of about the same age out

[1] In this respect Tale children resemble our own children; cf. S. Isaacs, *Intellectual Growth in Young Children*, pp. 99–102. She sums up: 'Imaginative play builds a bridge by which the child can pass from the symbolic values of things to active inquiry into their real construction and real way of working. . . . In his imaginative play the child recreates selectively those elements in past situations which can embody his emotional and intellectual need of the present, and he adapts the details moment by moment to the present situation. . . .' Cf. also the same author's *Social Development in Young Children*, p. 425, 'Play . . . is supremely the activity which brings him [the child] psychic equilibrium in the early years.'